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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: MINDEF COMMITS TO NARCOTICS AGENDA, DISSES MANTA

Classified By: PolOff Jarahn Hillsman, Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In her initial call on newly appointed Minister of Defense Marcelo Delgado on September 8, the Ambassador stressed the importance of continued USG-GOE counter-narcotics and northern border cooperation and urged progress on security reforms initiated under Delgado's predecessor. Delgado said that he would maintain continuity and expressed GOE desire to receive C130 airplanes and ground-based radar for Ecuador's northern border zone. Delgado also requested USG financial support to construct a dock on the strategic northern border river post at General Farfan and asked that Ecuadorian pilots be allowed in the cockpit of Manta FOL surveillance planes operating within Ecuadorian claimed 200 miles of airspace. While expressing a commitment to his predecessor's generally supportive policy positions and positive relations with the Embassy, Delgado will have little time in office to make a contribution. His public remarks after the meeting, questioning the benefits to Ecuador of the Manta FOL, were not helpful. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met with Minister of Defense Marcelo Delgado on September 8 to encourage continued USG-GOE cooperation to combat transnational threats. By way of introduction, Delgado spent much of the meeting discussing himself. He said that he had served as a young man in the presidential guard of Ecuador's legendary 5-time president Velasco Ibarra, and also served as chief of the aides de camp under Jaime Roldos (brother of presidential candidate Leon Roldos), who died in office. Delgado said that if it were not for his requested transfer to the Ecuador-Peru conflict zone, he likely would have perished in the 1981 plane crash that killed Roldos. Delgado confessed his disregard for Roldos' liberal politics, signaling more rightist leanings.

Extending the Hand of Cooperation  
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¶3. (C) During the cordial session, the Ambassador commended Ecuadorian military efforts to combat narcotics trafficking, and expressed USG desire to deepen cooperation. Delgado assured the Ambassador that he would continue that commitment as well as the Colombian border security enhancements initiated under his predecessor. Delgado fondly recounted his time in Washington, calling himself a "product" of U.S. military training and an ally. He warned, however, that his position as MinDef would obligate him to publicly express GOE positions contrary to his personal beliefs.

Hand Out for Help

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¶4. (C) Delgado conveyed the Ministry's interest in receiving C130 airplanes and ground-based radar for tracking flights originating in Colombia and operating along Ecuador's northern border. He requested USG financial support for the construction of a new dock for use by riverine marine forces at General Farfan in the Sucumbios province, and asked that Ecuadorian pilots be permitted in the cockpit of Manta FOL surveillance planes operating in Ecuadorian airspace (GOE claims up to 200 miles from their shores; they currently monitor information only to the 38-mile limit of their air traffic controller communication range).

¶5. (C) The Ambassador acknowledged his proposals but explained that USG resources were limited and that the Ministry would need to prioritize GOE requests. She suggested that Delgado visit the FOL to gain a full understanding of its mission and current levels of cooperation, making no direct comment about the 200 mile request other than to restate that we abide strictly by the terms of the bilateral agreement. Delgado considers himself a "caretaker" MinDef, but said that he would work to institute reforms initiated by Jarrin. He reported that there would be no high-level military command changes under his watch.

Then Takes Cheap Public Shot at the FOL  
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¶6. (U) Responding to a question from journalist on September 8, Delgado underscored the importance of combating narcotics trafficking aided by the Manta FOL, but said that he "personally" believed the agreement was poorly negotiated and that Ecuador has "received almost nothing in exchange." Delgado said he would oppose renewal unless conditions favored Ecuador, signaling greater financial support for the narcotics fight.

Comment  
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¶7. (C) Delgado appeared generally supportive of USG objectives to combat narcotics trafficking in the region, and committed to continue northern border security enhancements initiated under Jarrin. With only a four-month mandate until the next government takes office, Delgado did not signal any major policy shifts, and we expect to continue cooperative relations with the ministry. Delgado's negative Manta FOL comments are aligned with recent public statements made by Foreign Minister Francisco Carrion, and his request for FOL flight information out to 200 miles is consistent with the recent MOD position and likely comes from staff level. We hope to change his views on both with further education and personal understanding of FOL operations.

JEWELL